

frequently asked questions

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Q. Can you lose professional development hours if you change school districts?

A. No. A teacher's accrued professional development hours will carry over from one district to another.

REPRESENTATION ISSUES

- Q. Why is the teacher representation so large on the three oversight governance bodies?**
- A.** The active involvement and support of teachers is vital to the success of this new initiative. Majority representation creates a professional governance structure, rather than a bureaucratic one. This gives teachers the level of ownership needed to assure that professional development is relevant to those it is intended to benefit.
- Q. Were other organizations besides the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) ever asked to be involved in the development of these regulations?**
- A.** All of the major education associations have played a vital role in the development of the regulations, providing input throughout the lengthy development process for State Board of Education regulations. The major education associations will continue to play a key role in this initiative's successful implementation.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT REQUIREMENT ISSUES

Q. Why isn't this a recertification plan?

A. Professional development for teachers is a must, but the means to this end has several alternatives. After much research and discussion, the state board determined that recertification is not the answer. Instead, both the department and the state board believe the new professional development regulations effectively and collegially encourage teachers to continue their education. If approached as an alliance among teachers, the Department of Education (DOE), the State Board of Education and school districts, the impact of the program on teachers and their professional development is more likely to be positive than with a mandate that could be viewed as punitive. The greatest incentive for the productive participation of teachers is the fact that they will be involved in the development and implementation of this initiative.

Q. Which body has the higher authority — a county professional development board or the local board of education?

A. The regulations are clear on this. The local district committee's plan goes first to the county board for approval. Once approved by the county board, it goes back to the local board of education for district approval. If the local board does not approve the district professional development plan, the plan then goes back to the local professional development committee for revision and then once again to the county board and the local board of education for approval. The local board of education has the final approval.

Q. In seeking approval of district inservice activities, why does the plan go first to the county professional development board instead of the local board of education?

A. The County Professional Development Board will assure that district professional development plans are aligned with state professional development standards in all districts. Once the county board approves the plan, the local board of education approves or disapproves the plan based on its own specific considerations and needs.

Q. Is a teacher required to fulfill this professional development requirement when not actively working as a teacher?

A. No. The professional development requirement is only for active teachers. If a teacher has been on leave, as soon as the individual resumes teaching, the professional development requirement commences.

Q. Why not expand the membership of the local professional development committee so there could be input from more staff and other stakeholders? Why not involve colleges?

A. The regulations specify that there be one local professional development committee comprising four teachers and two administrators. However, the local committee will want to

seek input through school-level committees, as well as from other stakeholders, including higher education representatives. The regulations require that the local committee work closely with the superintendent and seek input from parents and the community. However, according to the regulations, the local committee has the ultimate responsibility for developing the final plan that is submitted to the county board. It should also be pointed out that higher education does have representation on the state-level Professional Teaching Standards Board, as well as the county professional development boards.

Q. Why not include in the regulations the possible penalties a teacher will incur if he/she does not fulfill the requirement?

A. Based on the support of this initiative by teachers, it is projected that only a few teachers will not complete the 100 hours. Administrators will need to use flexibility to determine the appropriate form of remedial action needed if a teacher does not fulfill the requirement based on a case-by-case review of the individual situations and the policies of the district.

Q. What areas will be acceptable as mandated professional development areas?

A. The PTSB has developed professional development standards approved by the Commissioner that will be used to approve/disapprove all professional development programs. The regulations specify that the professional development standards will emphasize, but not be limited to, the Core Curriculum Content Standards. The PTSB has also developed and the Commissioner has approved a framework that describes what counts for professional development. Such information is contained in the section entitled “A Professional Development Framework (*What Counts?*)” in *A New Vision for Professional Development* available on the DOE web site.

Q. What is the Department of Education’s official position with regard to half-day inservice activities?

A. The regulations call for 100 clock hours over five years for teachers and educational service personnel. The district determines the structure of local professional development programs. Districts will need to determine their own inservice calendars and hours per day based on their specific needs and contractual agreements. There is no state prohibition of half-day inservice programs. If inservice programs are approved, they count hour for hour.

Q. A teacher could easily be in compliance with the professional development regulations by taking two three-credit college courses and a few workshops. Why isn’t this requirement more rigorous and reflective of the state’s desire to elevate the profession?

A. The 100 hours is similar to requirements in other states. Once the program is operating, the amount of hours could be amended over time if the PTSB determines a change is necessary and makes recommendations to the State Board of Education.

Q. If a person is both a teacher and a supervisor, how will the 100-hour requirement work?
A. It will depend upon which license title the person is employed under in the district. If the individual is employed under the supervisor title, he/she will not be required to fulfill the 100-hour requirement. In fall 2001, the department will propose a professional development requirement for administrators.

Q. Will those education services personnel (e.g. school nurses, etc.) who must already do professional development for another license have to do this additional 100 hours or will other professional development count?

A. Offerings used to fulfill a professional's other licensure requirements will meet the approved professional development standards set forth in the new professional development regulations.

Q. Are speech therapists, occupational therapists and physical therapists included in the 100-hour requirement?

A. Yes. All licensed teachers and educational services personnel who work in a school district or a nonpublic school requiring licensure are included in the Professional Development for Teachers regulations.

Q. How does this requirement apply to part-time teachers?

A. A part-time teacher is required to accrue 50 hours of professional development within each five-year cycle. A part-time teacher is defined as one who is employed on a regular basis for the school year, but for less than the full school day or week.

In cases where teachers move back and forth between full and part-time employment within those five years, the following formula applies:

The formula is the calculation of part-time work added to full-time work: $X/5 \times \text{\#hours required in five years} = \text{the total number of hours required of that teacher}$. For example, the number of hours a teacher who is part-time for three years and full-time for two years would be calculated as follows: $(3/5 \times 50 = 30) + (2/5 \times 100 = 40) = 70$ total hours required.

Q. Are teachers who provide homebound instruction required to participate in the professional development initiative?

A. Yes. Teachers who provide homebound instruction for one or more districts are considered part-time teachers and must earn 50 hours over five years.

Q. When do professional development hours begin to count?

A. Professional development hours officially begin to count after September 1, 2000.

Q. What about teachers on leave?

- A. A teacher on a leave of one year or less shall be permitted to accrue professional development hours if he/she wants to do so if: (a) the teacher has developed a PIP for the school year covered by the leave or the subsequent year; (b) the teacher and the supervisor have signed off on the PIP; and (c) the teacher has delineated the potential professional development opportunities to meet that PIP.

Q. Must a teacher serving as a full-time released local education association president complete the 100 hours?

- A. Teachers serving as full-time released local education association presidents shall be considered “teachers on leave” and shall follow the procedures for those teachers.

IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

- Q. What happens if a school district does not have enough personnel to fulfill the required number of members for the local professional development committee?**
- A.** The department will review each situation individually to accommodate those districts that cannot comply with the regulations because of insufficient numbers of teachers or administrators.
- Q. Can hours accrued after fulfilling the 100 hours in the five-year period be carried over to the next five-year period?**
- A.** No. Accrued hours of professional development cannot be carried from one five-year period to the next five-year period. Any additional professional development hours accrued only can enhance the educator's knowledge base.
- Q. Can you lose professional development hours if you change school districts?**
- A.** No. A teacher's accrued professional development hours will carry over from one district to another.
- Q. What relationship is there between each teacher's Professional Improvement Plan (PIP) and the district's professional development plan?**
- A.** The teacher's PIP specifies the content of a teacher's professional development as determined by the teacher and the supervisor. The local district plan specifies the professional development activities based on the needs of the district. In many cases, the local inservice programs may fulfill the teacher's individual needs as identified in the PIP.
- Q. District administrators must document teacher progress on a yearly basis through the PIP process. Will there be a standard procedure?**
- A.** The PTSB has developed and the Commissioner has approved a standard procedure to guide administrators in the implementation of the professional development regulations through the PIP process. A suggested PIP form and record for professional development hours has been disseminated to all chief school administrators. A district may use this form, or it can be an addendum to the district's PIP form. Districts may also choose to develop their own forms as long as they meet the requirements specified in *N.J.A.C. 6:11-13.2* (b). This section of the Required Professional Development for Teacher regulations specifies that the content of the teacher's professional development must be included in the PIP. This content must meet the standards for professional development and also be in accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6:3-4*, the subchapter on supervision, observation, and evaluation of teaching staff members.

- Q. May teachers provide staff development activities for this initiative?**
- A.** Yes. Many teachers have already been involved in providing a wide range of professional development activities for other teachers in their districts and across the state. Teachers will continue to play a key role in the professional growth of other teachers.
- Q. Will there be professional development for administrators?**
- A.** Yes. The department plans to propose new regulations requiring professional development for administrators in 2001.
- Q. Why is a teacher's professional development not assessed with regard to its impact on student learning?**
- A.** The active and eager involvement of teachers in this initiative is vital to its success. This initiative has a positive focus which acknowledges the needs of teachers, like other professionals, to continually grow in the knowledge and art of their profession with the assumption that there will be a positive impact on student achievement.
- Q. Will the meetings of the Professional Teaching Standards Board and the County Professional Development Boards be public?**
- A.** Yes. All meetings of the state and county boards are public meetings. Meeting notices are advertised, and the boards follow the regulations for open public meetings.

FUNDING ISSUES

Q. How will districts cope with costs resulting from this initiative?

A. In many instances, where school districts already have strong professional development/inservice programs, there should be no new expense. Many districts already provide a large variety of professional development activities. In these cases, these districts will simply need to align their offerings with the new standards. Districts can make use of a variety of funding sources for professional development including federal, state, and local monies, as well as funding opportunities through grants or corporate ventures.

Q. Will members of the local committee be paid?

A. This issue will need to be addressed at the local level.

EVALUATION ISSUES

- Q. Will districts be monitored for compliance with Professional Development for Teachers regulations?**
- A.** Yes. Districts will be monitored for compliance with the new professional development regulations.
- Q. Can a teacher lose his or her license if he or she does not fulfill the requirement?**
- A.** At the end of the five-year cycle, districts are required to report to the Department of Education those teachers who have not fulfilled the professional development requirement, along with a description of the actions taken by the district. The Commissioner will review each instance of noncompliance on a case-by-case basis. It is anticipated that there will be very few non-compliant teachers. The Commissioner could determine that a case of noncompliance should be reviewed by the Board of Examiners for possible suspension or revocation of the license in accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6:11 - 3.4*. It may be determined that a variety of other remedial actions are warranted.
- Q. What happens if an administrator and a teacher cannot agree on the PIP?**
- A.** The process for designing the PIP should be a collegial one developed in good faith by both the teacher and the supervisor. Current research on effective professional development supports involving teachers in the planning and design of their own professional development. New Jersey professional development standards reflect this approach, stressing the importance of collegial support, collaboration and interaction in assuring the professional growth of educators. In the case of a disagreement about the content of the PIP, as a last resort, the supervisor may specify the content of the PIP. The supervisor would consider the professional development for teachers regulations, the professional development standards, and other relevant professional development planning and implementation documents. When there is a disagreement and the administrator chooses the specific activities, it is advised that the administrator discuss the reasons for the selected content with the teacher.

COUNTY PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT BOARDS

Q. What exactly does the county board approve?

A. The major responsibility of the county board is to approve the district-level plans. Criteria for review and approval of district plans have been completed by the PTSB. The District Planning and County Review documents were developed by the PTSB and approved by the Commissioner. These documents are part of *A New Vision for Professional Development*, which also contains a format for reviewing plans.

THE PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT PROVIDER SYSTEM

- Q. Can districts or individual staff members provide training for other districts and will they need to become providers?**
- A.** Yes. Districts can provide professional development for other districts but will need to become registered providers. Such districts must register on the provider registration system on the DOE web site. If districts are only providing professional development within the district, they do not need to register. They have already been registered by the DOE and assigned a registration number that is the same as their DOE data processing code number. If a staff member is providing professional development within the district, he or she does not need to register. However, if the staff member is providing professional development out of the district, the district itself will need to register.
- Q. How does one register as a professional development provider?**
- A.** The electronic registration process is available at the department's web site at www.state.nj.us/njded/profdev/providers/index.html.
- Q. How will the PTSB assure that only providers who can provide effective training are approved?**
- A.** A major goal of the professional development provider registration system is to provide educators and school district officials with information regarding professional development opportunities that can be easily accessed via the department's web site. As with any directory, it is incumbent upon users to determine whether the training/provider meets their needs. Providers are required to affirm a statement of assurance that their offerings are aligned with New Jersey's professional development standards.

WHAT COUNTS?

Q. What activities count for the 100-hour professional development requirement?

A. The PTSB has developed a professional development framework. This document, approved by the Commissioner, was distributed at the professional development orientation sessions and sent to all chief school administrators. It is also part of the state planning document called *A New Vision for Professional Development* available on the DOE web site.

Q. Will attendance at conventions, sponsored by such organizations as the New Jersey Education Association (NJEA) and National Council of Teachers of Mathematics (NCTM), count?

A. Yes. Attendance at conferences sponsored by higher education, boards of education, professional associations, training organizations, and other entities approved through the district plan will count toward the requirement.

Q. Will working on a committee, such as a textbook committee or a county professional development board, or preparing and presenting a professional workshop count?

A. Yes, activities that serve the profession such as these will count towards the 100 hours. The Commissioner has determined that teachers may earn a maximum of 75 of their 100 hours for activities in this category (activities that serve the profession). Committee service is capped at 10 hours per year regardless of the number of committees.

Q. Can hours be accrued through a three-credit college course?

A. Yes, the hours for college courses will be counted by actual clock hours of attendance. A three-credit college course will accrue forty-five professional development hours based on a forty-five-semester-hour course.

Q. Will those working under a vocational certificate be able to use the training in their skills trade area toward the 100 hours?

A. Yes, vocational teachers training in their skills trade area will count as long as the training meets the professional development standards and is aligned with the state's framework.

Q. Will teachers working with provisional licenses need to accrue the 100 hours?

A. Provisional teachers trained through the Alternate Route and those traditionally prepared through a college-approved teacher education program do not need to begin to accrue the 100 hours of professional development. However, once a staff member receives a standard license, the professional development requirement begins.

Q. Will independent study count?

A. Yes, independent professional studies is one of the categories approved by the Commissioner.

Q. Will a provisional teacher need to write a PIP?

A. A teacher working under a provisional license does not need to write a PIP. However, a teacher will need to complete a PIP in anticipation of receiving a standard license and contract for the subsequent year. The PIP should be written in the spring of the provisional year.